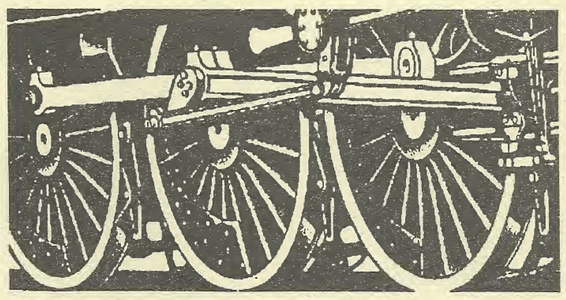
Script

THE LOCOSCRIPT NEWSLETTER



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The release of LocoFile and the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc has meant a new version of LocoScript. Like most new versions, where changes can go unnoticed, upgrading to this version will make little difference to the way you use LocoScript. But you can change the way you organise your Start up discs. In fact, if you upgrade to the latest version, we recommend that you ignore the advice given in the Start up article in Issue 5! The principles of organising your Start up discs are still the same but the details are very different. The article on page 3 explains the differences and explores some of the subtle changes in the new version.

We've had an enthusiastic response to LocoFile, with many people commenting on how easy the program is to use. It's also provoked many queries, ranging from general questions to people seeking individual advice about setting up suitable datafiles. To answer the most common questions and to give you some ideas about what you can do with LocoFile, we're starting a new series on LocoFile.

We kick off the series by looking at the most common requirement – printing information from LocoFile. One apparent restriction of LocoFile's print options is the way it prints one record per sheet of paper. Many people want to know if they can print out lists from their LocoFile datafiles. The answer is that there are **two** solutions to this problem! In the article on page 12, we describe the 'LocoFile solution'. In the next issue we'll see how you can achieve even better results by using LocoMail.

Another article in this issue looks at the quick ways of telling LocoScript what to do. Whether you're editing text, inserting codes or moving around menus, there's probably a quicker way of doing it than simply using the menus and cursor keys. The 'Shortcuts' article describes the principles behind the quick keystroking and shows you where and how to use them.

The LocoMail article is a bit different. Rather than tackle a specific task, we've asked John Blandford, one of the people offering LocoMail consultancy, to describe typical problems he's solved during the past year. For those who don't have time to study the User Guide, consultancy might be the answer. This article should give you an idea of how useful it could be.

Contents

NEWS 2

Better typestyles for 24 pin printers; easier upgrading to the latest version

NEW VERSION 3

Introducing LocoScript 2.20 and its new features

SHORTCUTS 6

Quick keystroking for faster results

LOCOMAIL 9

Solving LocoMail problems: a consultant's view

LOCOFILE 12

How to print lists from a LocoFile datafile

LETTERS 14

POSTSCRIPT 16

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News

24 Pin Printer Drivers

This product has received a mixed reception. Whilst many people are very happy with the huge range of characters, superior print quality and speed, there is a minority who aren't.

One criticism is that the style of characters we chose for the 24 pin versions of the Standard and Sans Serif fonts are lighter than those of the fonts built into the printers, and in some cases can appear "dotty". Clearly this is unsatisfactory. We don't want our customers to feel dissatisfied, and so we are going to add new darker versions of the fonts to give a better appearance.

Anyone who would like to get the new fonts should return their 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc to Locomotive and we'll send out a replacement free of charge.

A second, and more serious drawback concerns the use of the Amstrad LQ printers. When used with the 24 Pin Driver, they print very slowly. To get the full range of LocoScript 2 characters we "download" the shapes of the special characters into the printer. For some reason this makes the Amstrad printers print in two passes of each line (or if underlining, four passes).

Unfortunately, there is nothing we can do about this since the reason to use the 24 pin drivers is to get the special characters and this cannot be done without using downloaded characters. We have tested a number of other manufacturers' printers and none has exhibited the same problem.

So if you've got an Amstrad LQ printer and are happy with the characters it can print as standard, don't buy the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc – buy the ordinary Printer Drivers Disc instead. If you use the LQ3500X.PRI driver from this disc you'll get maximum speed.

However, if you want to print special characters (like Greek, Cyrillic or Maths), and speed is important, buy a different printer – we suggest the NEC P2200 as an alternative to the LQ3500 (or the NEC P6 if you want a faster, but more expensive printer). An alternative to the LQ5000 isn't so easy to find – the NEC P7 is a good wide carriage printer, but it is considerably more expensive.

There are a few 24 pin printers that aren't supported by the current 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc. The list may well change, so if you are going to buy a 24 pin printer to use with our software, ask our sales department. They always have an up to date list of the printers we support.

Product Changes

We've also decided to change the way we sell some of the LocoScript 2 add-ons. Many PCW8256/8512 owners have been confused by the Printer Drivers Disc and the Printer Character Sets Disc. The distinction between the Keyboards Disc and LocoKey has also proved a mystery for many PCW owners.

So we have decided to rationalise these products so that there's a single product for ordinary printer support and a single product for keyboard customisation. An added bonus is now the product names are the same irrespective of which PCW you have – although you'll still have to specify which PCW so we can provide either the PCW8000 installation program or 9512 software upgrade.

The new products are the Printers Disc and the Keyboards Disc and they will each cost £19.95.

Upgrades to LocoScript 2

Along with our new products LocoFile and the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc, we have introduced a new version of LocoScript 2. There's an article in this issue of *Script* which explains some of the new features. We've also introduced a simpler way of getting the latest version.

Previously if you had an early version of LocoScript 2 for the PCW8256/8512 and wanted to upgrade to the latest version you had to send back your master disc with the upgrade fee and we'd exchange the disc. This was both expensive to operate and inconvenient – many people wanted the upgrade immediately and couldn't wait for two sets of postal delays!

So now we've introduced a special Installation Program which upgrades your copy of LocoScript 2 to the latest version – and indeed will upgrade LocoScript '1' versions of LocoMail and LocoSpell to work with LocoScript 2. (What it won't do is upgrade LocoScript '1' to LocoScript 2.) We now supply this installation program free with all our LocoScript family products for the 8256 and 8512, so it's unlikely you'll ever need to buy an upgrade again.

Early copies of LocoScript 2 did lack some features which are now supplied as standard along with LocoScript 2 itself – the LocoChar program to create sixteen characters to your own design, and the Sans Serif font. For PCW8256/8512 owners who want to get these, or who simply want to get the latest version of LocoScript 2 and don't want to buy another program, we've introduced the LocoScript 2 Upgrade Disc. This is a disc with the installation program, LocoChar and the Sans Serif font. It costs £14.95, and as you don't need to return your master disc, you can order it from us by phone.

In response to demand from PCW9512 owners we have also introduced an Upgrade Disc for the 9512. This contains the latest versions of LocoScript 2, LocoMail and LocoSpell for the PCW9512. This too costs £14.95 and, like the 8000 version, you don't need to return any master discs and you can order by phone.

Introducing LocoScript 2.20

Those of you who have bought LocoFile or the new 24-pin Printer Drivers Disc will already know that we've released LocoScript version 2.20.

This article introduces the new version. It explains some of the new features we've included, and shows you how to make the most of them when organising your Start-up discs.

When we added LocoFile and the 24-pin printer drivers to the range of LocoScript products, we had to make some subtle changes to LocoScript 2 to enable these products to run.

Since we were releasing a new version, we took the opportunity to solve a couple of problems and make some improvements – mainly in response to your suggestions. For instance...

- We've made LocoScript load from more than one Drive A disc, so that all the files you need on Drive M can now be copied automatically – even on a PCW8256.
- You can have more room on Drive M for templates or editing large files, particularly if you use the PCW8256/8512's built-in printer and more than one font.
- We've made it easier and more reliable to install new software and upgrade to the latest version.
- LocoChar, the PCW8256/8512 character design program, will now copy user-defined characters from one font to another.

Loading all you want

If you own a PCW8256 with 512k of memory, you have probably found the small number of files you can fit on your Start-of-day disc very restrictive. There isn't room on a 180k disc for all the files you have room for on Drive M.

The problem is peculiar to PCW8256s with 512k of memory. If your machine is a PCW8512 you can put the extra files you want on a Drive B disc, while if you use a PCW9512 there is plenty of room for all the files on the 720k Start-of-day disc which that machine uses. A PCW8256 with only 256k of memory doesn't have room on Drive M for any more than can fit on a 180k Drive A disc. But with a single-drive PCW8256 and 512k of memory, if you needed extra files on Drive M (dictionaries, for example) you used to have to load LocoScript and then copy the extra files by hand.

From version 2.20, you can now load LocoScript from a sequence of Drive A discs: one Start-of-day disc followed by one or more "Start-up" discs containing the extra files you want copied to Drive M. So if you want you can store your dictionaries and/or Character Set files on a separate disc, or even on Side 2 of your Start-of-day disc. (Though you'll still have to take the disc out and put it back the other way round – your PCW can't read both sides of a Drive A disc at once!)

To get LocoScript to ask for another disc, you have to put a file with the name ET.AL on your Start-of-day disc. This triggers LocoScript to prompt you for a second disc after it has read all the files on the first. When all the files have been read from the second disc, LocoScript looks for an ET.AL file there too. If it finds one, it prompts you to insert a third Start-up disc. This process can continue for as long as you like; LocoScript will continue to ask for more discs until either you insert a disc without an ET.AL, or you press CAN when prompted for a new disc. Normally, though, you will only need one extra Start-up disc – two at the most.

More space on Drive M

We've changed the way LocoScript holds printer information, with the result that Drive M generally has more room for other files. If you only use one font on a PCW 8256/8512, there's little difference, but people with a PCW8256/8512 who use two or more fonts on the built-in printer will notice an immediate improvement. For example, if you have a PCW8256 with 256k of memory, and you use the built-in printer with Standard and Sans Serif fonts, the space on Drive M available for your own files has increased by 12k. This may not seem much, but it is vital if you have little to start with.

It works like this. The new version of LocoScript only takes 8k of memory as its 'printer working space', rather than the 16k it did before. It saves this 8k space by taking the Character Set information it needs directly from the appropriate file on Drive M rather than making a copy in the printer working space.

But this isn't all the space you gain. The 'Standard' font that used to be stored in MATRIX.PRI (the file that drives the PCW8256/8512's built-in printer) is now stored in a separate MATRIX.#ST file, leaving MATRIX.PRI much smaller. Because the printer driver is now held separately from the fonts, LocoScript doesn't need to keep the printer driver on Drive M just to keep a copy of the font file. This represents a saving of 4k.

This change has had a number of other effects. For a start you must have at least one MATRIX.# file on your Start-of-day disc before you can print anything on this printer.

Secondly, all the while you have a printer available, there's either a Character Set file or a Printer Driver file in use on Drive M. (You'll see the message `Using M:` on the top information line.) Normally, this file will be visible on Drive M but if all you want to use is one font on the MATRIX

printer, then the character set information is held as an extra 8k System file on this drive instead.

Having files open on Drive M can produce difficulties, especially if you've run into `Disc Full` problems and you need every scrap of memory you can find in order to save the document you're editing.

With the new system, you can even regain space occupied by the font file the printer is currently using. You can't simply erase it: if you try, you will get the message `File is already in use`. But if you go into Printer Control State, you'll find a new option in the f5 Printer menu: `Remove Character Set`. If you select this option then return to the Disc Manager, you will find that you can now remove all your Printer Driver and Character Set files. (The special 8k System file will disappear of its own accord.)

You don't need to reset your PCW before you can print again. Simply copy the appropriate Printer Driver or Character Set file to Group 0 of Drive M, go back into Printer Control State and select the Character Set in the f5 Printer menu, and the option to print will be restored.

Easier upgrades

When you buy one of our add-on programs – LocoFont, LocoFile, LocoSpell, or whatever – you may find that you need to upgrade your version of LocoScript before you use the add-on program. Alternatively, you might simply prefer to keep your version of LocoScript up to date.

From version 2.20 we've made upgrading much more straightforward. Previously, when PCW8256/8512 owners upgraded to a new version of LocoScript, they first had to send us their old LocoScript 2 master disc. Then they had to make a new Start-of-day disc, possibly copying a number of files around from one place to another. PCW9512 owners, on the other hand, had an easier job setting up their new Start-of-day disc, though they could only upgrade to a new version of LocoScript 2 if they bought one of our add-on products for their machine.

From version 2.20, PCW9512 owners can upgrade their version of LocoScript 2 whenever they want, while PCW8256/8512 owners don't have to send in their old LocoScript 2 master disc; instead, we supply an installation program to do the upgrading for you. This program creates a new Start-of-day disc and updates the add-on programs you use (LocoMail, LocoSpell and LocoFile) where required. It will also update all the fonts you use.

Running the installation program couldn't be simpler: you just switch on the computer (or reset it) insert the installation disc we supply, find a couple of spare discs to use as your new Start-of-day and Start-up discs and follow the instructions which appear on the screen.

There are, however, a couple of things to note about this program. Firstly, unlike all the other programs we supply, the installation program must be run from the original disc, not a copy. Secondly, it will ask you for the original master discs for LocoScript 2 and for any LocoScript add-on programs you have. If you've followed our advice and kept these discs safely stored away, everything will be fine. But if you've altered them at all, the installation program won't accept them, and you'll have to send them back to us for replacement. Unfortunately we have to make a small handling charge for this.

Other changes we've made

The other changes we've made are relatively minor.

One thing we've done is to change the rules about the way templates (TEMPLATE.STD files) and group names are copied to Drive M at Start-up. These are now loaded from any of your Start-up discs (either Drive A or Drive B) and not just your Start-of-day disc. Moreover, we've arranged it so that if a template is copied from a group that has a group name, then this group name is copied as well (provided that doesn't give you two groups on Drive M with the same name).

Another change at Start-up is that it is no longer essential to have Character Set files (which have filetype starting with #) on the same disc as the Printer Driver file (with filetype .PRI) they work with. Instead, the new rules allow the Printer Driver file to be on a different disc provided this disc is searched before the disc containing the Character Sets. So for example, you can now have the MATRIX.PRI file on your Drive A Start-of-day disc but keep all the font files for this printer on one of the other Start-up discs – either your Drive B Start-up disc if you have a PCW8512 or on one of the Drive A Start-up discs you insert in sequence after the Start-of-day disc. (In fact, if you buy LocoFont, you will now find this specifically recommended.)

We've also made a few changes to LocoScript's add-on programs, LocoMail and LocoSpell. Principally we've made these programs work with the new version of LocoScript 2, but there have also been some changes of detail about the way they work. In particular, the upgraded version of LocoMail is not only able to pull in data from LocoFile datafiles, but it also contains a couple of extra commands that allow you to take advantage of LocoFile's indexes from within LocoMail. (There will be more about these commands in the next issue of *Script*.)

We've also produced a new version of LocoChar, the program that allows PCW8256/8512 owners to design and print their own characters. Again, the main reason for this has been to produce a program that works with updated font files (but unfortunately not with both old and new font files). But what is more interesting, is that the new program can transfer the sixteen user-defined characters from one Character Set file to another. This new facility means you can readily have same user-defined characters available in a number of different font files.

It isn't necessary to upgrade to the new version unless you really want to; if you're happy with the version you're using, that's fine with us! The only time you must run v2.20 or later is if you want to use LocoFile or the 24-pin drivers disc – and you automatically get the latest version with these products when you buy them. You can, of course, upgrade if you wish – by sending £14.95 for an Upgrade disc (remember to say whether you want it for a PCW8256/8512 or a PCW9512).

The Files on Your Start-up Discs

There are essentially four different kinds of file which you need on your Start-up discs:

Program Files

The Program files are KEYBOARD.JOY (which lets you use the keyboard), DISCMAN.JOY (which gives you the Disc Manager screen), SCRIPT.JOY (which lets you edit documents), SCRCHAR.JOY (which lets you display them on the screen) and J*xxx*LOCO.EMS (which looks after everything else!).

You can't generally see these Program files on the disc because we've hidden them so that you're less likely to erase them accidentally. You can see them if you put a tick beside the option to 'Show Hidden files' in the f8 Options menu.

If you use LocoSpell, LocoMail, and LocoFile then you'll have three more Program files on the disc – LOCOSPEL.JOY, LOCOMAIL.JOY, and LOCOFILE.JOY.

Program files *must* be loaded from your Start-of-day disc or you won't even be able to load LocoScript!

Printer files

A Printer file holds information about a particular printer's facilities, how to use them, and the characters in the printer's Character Set. There are two types of file – those which hold information about running the printer (these have a filetype of .PRI or .DRV) and Character Set files, which contain details of characters available on the printer.

The Printer Driver file for the 8000 series built-in matrix printer is MATRIX.PRI and that for the 9512 is PCW9512.PRI. To use an external printer you'll need the appropriate Printer Driver for that printer and either INSTALL.DRV or, if you are using a 24-Pin printer, LQ24.DRV.

Character Set files take the same file*name* as the .PRI file they are associated with but have a file*type* which starts with a #. On the 8000 series built-in printer, each Character Set contains LocoScript's full range of characters but in different typestyles. For example MATRIX.#SS contains characters in the Sans Serif typestyle.

If you use any Printer files at all, there must be at least one .PRI or .DRV file on your Start-of-day disc, but you *don't* need to keep all your font files there – unlike earlier versions, these can go on any Start-up disc.

Information files

SETTINGS.STD and PHRASES.STD are the two Information files that LocoScript uses. SETTINGS.STD holds a list of all the printers, Character Sets and Paper Types that LocoScript knows about. PHRASES.STD holds a standard set of phrases which LocoScript can automatically load for you from your Start-up discs.

Although you must keep the Settings file on your Start-of-day disc, you can load your phrases from Drive B, from a second or subsequent Drive A Start-up disc or by hand from a different disc later on. (For more information about Phrases, see the article in Issue 3 of *Script*.)

Support files

The Support files are TEMPLATE.STDs, spelling dictionaries (if you use LocoSpell), and datafiles (if you use LocoFile). The dictionaries all have a filetype of .DCT, and datafiles have type .DAT.

Support files can be loaded from any of your Start-up discs. Templates and datafiles can be copied from any group but dictionaries can only be copied from group 7 or group 0.

Constructing Start-up discs

To finish, it's worth looking at what effect the new features of LocoScript v2.20 have on the way you should organise your Start-up discs. As you might expect, it depends on the type of PCW you have.

If you have a PCW9512, the new version of LocoScript doesn't make a great deal of difference to the Start-up discs you use. Your Start-of-day disc can hold 706k – far more than you have room for in the computer's memory. So everything you want copied to Drive M when you start your computer (font files, printer files, LocoSpell dictionaries, LocoFile data, templates,...) can all be put on one Start-of-day disc. You don't need to worry about multiple Start-up discs at all (though they will still work if you want to make life complicated!)

Owners of PCW8512s will also find life very much as before – except, of course, that you now have an installation program to help you set up your new Start-up discs. The recommendation is still that you put your Program files (J*xxx*LOCO.EMS and all the .JOY files) together with SETTINGS.STD on your Drive A Start-of-day disc and put the extra files that you want on a Drive B Start-up disc. Drive B discs are easily big enough to hold all the files you want copied to Drive M. The main difference is that you can now put any templates you want on your Drive B Start-up disc.

If you have a PCW8256 with only 256k of memory, there is little point in trying to use the new system of ET.AL files, because with so little memory you shouldn't try to squeeze more onto Drive M than will fit on one disc. What you should do, of course, is increase the amount of memory to 512k! But while you've only got 256k, the best thing to do is to make a separate Start-of-day disc for each LocoScript product you will be using. So one of your Start-of-day discs will be configured to run LocoFile, one will have a few fonts, one will have LocoSpell and so on. The only LocoScript product you can put on all your discs is LocoMail, which doesn't take up any extra space in memory.

The real changes – and the real advantages – affect owners of PCW8256s with 512k of memory. The new system means that you no longer have to laboriously copy such things as your LocoSpell dictionary to Drive M by hand. Instead, you just need to put a file called ET.AL on your Start-of-day disc and store the files which won't fit on your Start-of-day disc onto another Drive A disc. (By the way, it doesn't matter what the ET.AL files contain: it's probably simplest if they are empty.)

Just like PCW8512 owners, you must put your Program files (J*xxx*LOCO.EMS and the .JOY files) together with SETTINGS.STD on your first Start-up disc – the Start-of-day disc. But you also have a further restriction: you must put at least one .PRI or .DRV file on the Start-of-day disc too. If you don't, you will find it impossible to print anything.

Beyond that, you are free to put the files wherever it is most convenient for you. However, we recommend that you put the files you use least on the last disc in your sequence of Start-up discs: dictionaries, for example, or LocoFile data is best put there. Any time you know you won't need these files on Drive M, you can save time when loading by pressing [CAN] when the Alert message appears asking you to insert this final disc. LocoScript will then stop copying files to Drive M and display the Disc Manager Screen.

Shortcuts in LocoScript

A feature of LocoScript is that standard techniques are applicable to a number of different actions.

For example, whatever change you want to make to the format of your document, there's a menu that will help you do this. Similarly, whatever form of cursor you are currently working with, pressing the Cursor keys will move it step by step. The cursor in your text will move character by character; the cursor in a menu will move to the next option in the menu.

This consistent approach is a great advantage to beginners because it means that you don't have to remember complicated spells to get LocoScript to work. When you are more experienced, however, calling up menus and moving step by step around the screen can be tedious. So LocoScript also includes a range of shortcuts – special keystrokes that give you the results you want very much quicker. The shortcut you will probably be familiar with is using the Set and Clear keys to type in word-processing codes like (+Bold) and (+Pitch12), but there are a number of other shortcuts – not all of which are covered in the User Guide!

The majority of the shortcuts in LocoScript fall into five main areas:

- Moving around the screen
- Moving around a document (in which we include moving around a LocoFile datafile)
- Moving around menus
- Inserting word-processing codes, and
- Setting margins and tabs

In this article, we will be looking at the shortcuts available in each of these five areas. Naturally, we will be concentrating on LocoScript 2 but, in fact, a number of the techniques we describe can also be used in LocoScript '1'.

Moving around the screen

The simple way of moving a cursor around the screen is to use the four Cursor keys – [←] [→] [↑] and [↓]. Pressing these keys enables you to move the cursor anywhere – or, at least, anywhere that it is valid for the cursor to go. But it can take a considerable time to get to your destination, particularly if it's the beginning or the end of a document.

The way to speed up such movements is to hold down the [SHIFT] key as you press the Cursor keys. The effect of the [SHIFT] key is to make the cursor move in 'bigger' steps, though precisely what 'bigger' means depends on what you are doing. If you are working on a document, holding down the [SHIFT] key makes the cursor jump 40 characters at a time across the screen or 20 lines up and down the screen (depending, of course, on which Cursor key you are pressing).

On the Disc Manager Screen, however, the effect of the [SHIFT] key is to move from group to group rather than from file to file. (Where the group you want to move to doesn't contain any files, then you *have* to use [SHIFT] plus Cursor key to get to this group.) In a menu, [SHIFT] + [↓] and [SHIFT] + [↑] move the cursor straight to the bottom or the top of the menu, respectively.

Moving around a document

As you would expect, holding down [SHIFT] as you press the Cursor keys speeds up moving around a document considerably. However, the most efficient technique here is to use the special Textual Movement keys – [EOL], [PARA], [PAGE], [DOC] etc. These move the cursor straight to the end of the line or to the beginning of the next paragraph or wherever.

Once again, the 'Shifted' option on each of these keys is typically associated with the larger movement: for example, hold down [SHIFT] when pressing [CHAR] and the cursor moves to the beginning of the next word; hold down [SHIFT] while pressing [PAGE] and the cursor moves to the end of the document.

If you hold down the [ALT] key while pressing one of these Textual Movement keys, then the rule is that the cursor moves the same distance but in the opposite direction. For example, holding down [ALT] while pressing [PAGE] moves the cursor moves the cursor to the start of the current page; holding down [ALT] while pressing [DOC] moves the cursor to the start of the document.

Holding down [ALT] also has a 'backwards' effect with the Cursor keys while you are editing a document but of a slightly different type. As there is a Cursor key for each direction, there is no point in [ALT] simply reversing the direction in which the cursor moves. So its actual action is to keep the cursor in the same place on the screen and move the text behind it instead *in the opposite direction to that shown on the Cursor key*. (You see, there is a 'backwards' element in this action.) Again the distance moved is greater if you hold

down [SHIFT] as well, but the really magic feature of using [ALT] is that the cursor goes to exactly the same place in the document as it would if you had just pressed the Cursor key on its own: try it for yourself, if you don't believe us!

The Textual Movement keys also have a role to play in moving around a LocoFile datafile. The individual records of the datafile are rather like pages while the whole datafile is rather like a document, so we made [PAGE] move from record to record and [DOC] move to the end of the datafile. As you might expect (because we like to be consistent) [ALT] + [PAGE] moves to the previous record and [ALT] + [DOC] moves to the start of the datafile.

The other Textual Movement keys ([CHAR], [WORD] etc.) keep their usual actions in LocoFile – moving to the next character, word or whatever in the part of the record on which you are currently working. So instead of using [PARA], for example, to move from item to item in a record, LocoFile uses [ENTER] to move to the next item in the record and [RELAY] to move to the previous item. ([ALT] + [ENTER] couldn't be used because this sets Caps Lock.)

Moving around menus

When moving the Menu cursor, again the plodding option of pressing the Cursor keys will always work. However, there are a number of quicker ways to select options within LocoScript menus. For example, you can use [SHIFT] + [↓] to move straight to the bottom of a menu and [SHIFT] + [↑] to move straight to the top, while pressing [EXIT] will take you to the EXIT option if there's one included in the menu.

The main quick way to move around a menu is to start typing the name of the menu option you require. As soon as LocoScript identifies from your typing the option you require, the cursor jumps to this option. You don't even have to type all the letters of the menu option: LocoScript automatically matches what you type to all the menu options and picks the option that fits.

While you can, if you wish, type the full text of the menu option, there is rarely any need to type more than the first letter before the cursor will jump to the correct place. At least for all the most common actions, the menu option starts with a unique letter so that just typing the first letter will do. For example, `Abandon edit` is the only option starting with an A in the Exit menu you get when you finish editing a document. As a result, all you need to type to finish editing a document and select the `Abandon edit` option is just [EXIT]A.

However, we weren't able to make all the menu options start with different letters. For example, in the File menu there are two options that start with the letter R – `Rename file` and `Recover from limbo`. If you just type R, then you will always pick out the `Rename file` option because this appears above `Recover from limbo` in the menu.

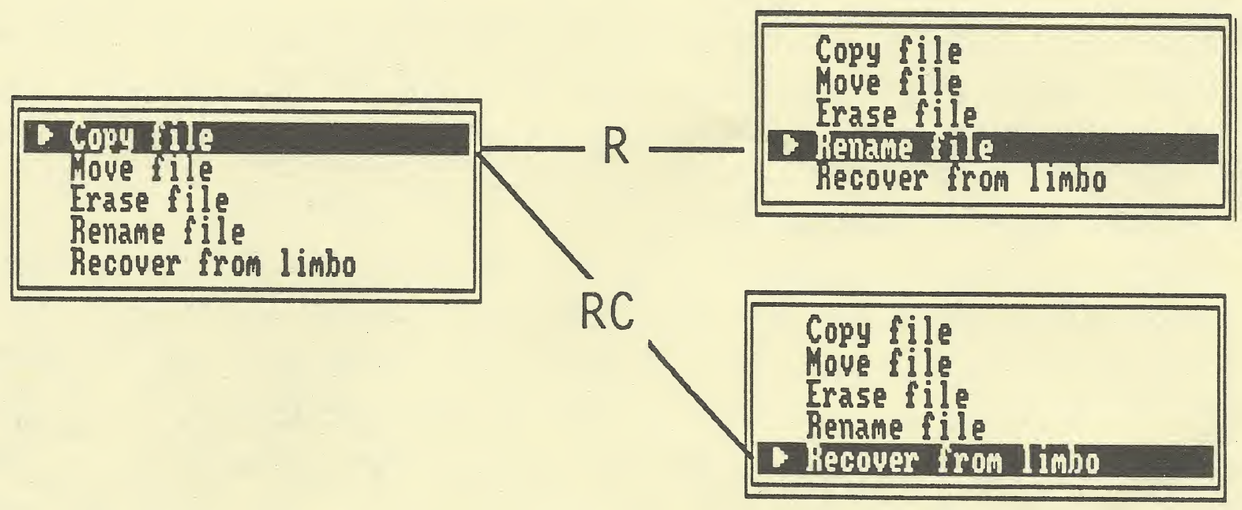
To pick out `Recover from limbo` instead, you either have to cursor down from `Rename file` or follow the R by letters like C or V or R that fit `Recover from limbo` but don't fit `Rename file`. It's no good typing RL or RFL because these letters appear in `Rename file` as well. However, while it's perfectly possible to work out suitable combinations of letters to type, it is probably easiest simply to learn what works in practice!

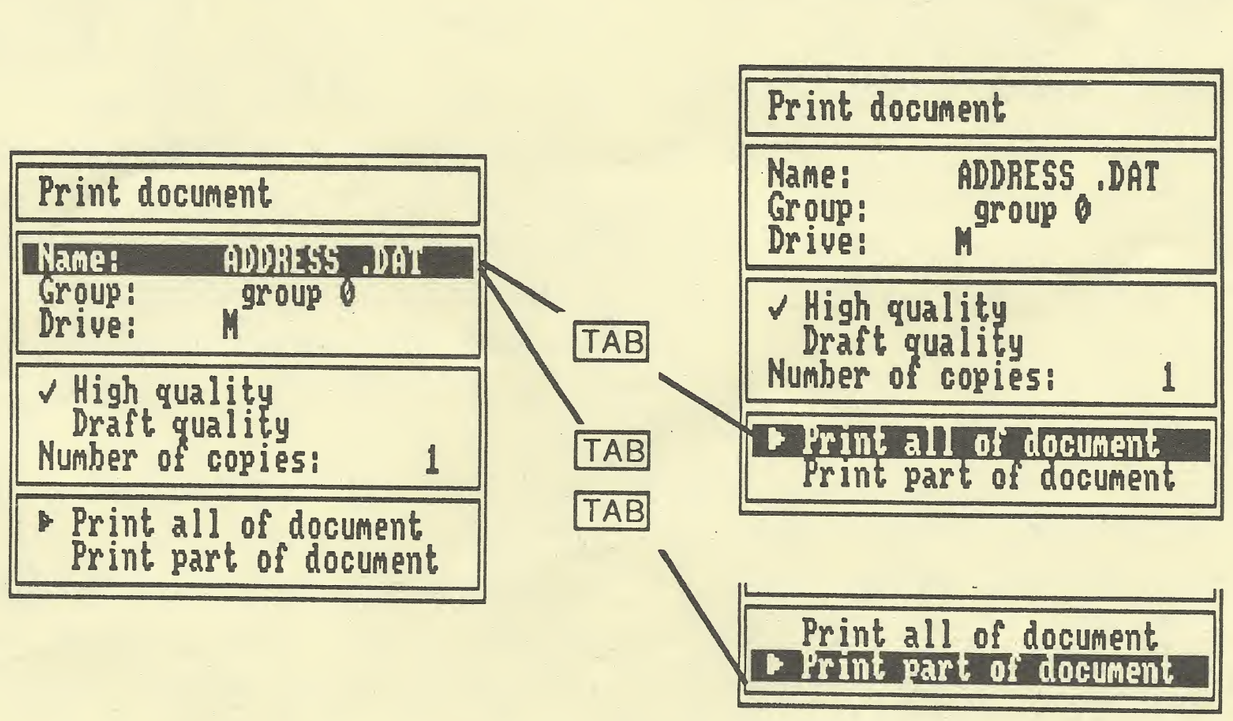
But a word of warning before you try using this technique. You **must** check first that the cursor isn't currently over a name that you type or a piece of text that you want LocoScript to search for. Otherwise, LocoScript may take your typing as meaning that you want to change this information, destroying the name or the piece of text that you have carefully set up!

Before we leave the subject of menus, there are a couple of other shortcuts worth mentioning. The first is using [⌫] to clear some or all of a name or a piece of text for LocoScript to find or exchange. When you press [⌫], the part of the name to the right of the small cursor within the name slot is cleared. You cou use this, for example, to clear the remains of the `DOCUMENT.`*xxx* name LocoScript gives you for a new document.

The other special technique is pressing [TAB] to move straight to the next Command option in a menu. (A Command option is simply one that gives LocoScript a command to carry out – marked with an arrow ▶ or a diamond ◆ when it is selected.) For example, if you want to move from the top of the Print menu to the `Print part of the document` option at the bottom, you can do this by pressing [TAB] twice (or by pressing [TAB] followed by [↓] if you prefer).

Pressing [TAB] works anywhere except on the text slots at the top of the Find and Exchange menus. It doesn't work there because Tabs are valid characters to include in the Find and Exchange text. When you press [TAB], LocoScript assumes you mean to add a Tab to the text.





Inserting word-processing codes

The technique of moving around menus by typing some or all of the menu option is also used (in a slightly special way) to insert word-processing codes like `(+Bold)` and `(-Italic)` into a document.

The standard way of inserting these codes is to use the Style, Size and Layout menus. The codes that control print effects like Bold and Italic can be inserted using the Style menu; the codes making individual changes to Character Pitch and Line Spacing can be inserted via the Size menu; and Layout codes can be inserted via the Layout menu.

The quick method of inserting these codes is to use the Set and Clear keys [⊞] and [⊟], followed by one or more letter or number keys.

[⊞]B	(+Bold)
[⊞]P12[ENTER]	(+Pitch12)

The code is typically inserted as soon as LocoScript recognises the code you are inserting (though if you spend so long typing the letters that the Set or Clear menu appears, the code isn't inserted until you press [ENTER]).

However, if you also have to type a number, then you will need to press [ENTER] to 'finish' the number before the code is inserted. (If you make a mistake as you type the code, you can press [←DEL] to rub out the mistake and re-type – just as if you were typing text.)

The menus that you are moving around when you type [⊟]B, [⊞]P12[ENTER] etc. are the Set and Clear menus. The [⊞] or [⊟] calls up the appropriate menu; the letters you type are matched against the options in the menu. The special feature of moving round these menus is that there is no need to press [ENTER] to tell LocoScript to go ahead unless the menu has actually been displayed on the screen – and LocoScript deliberately delays displaying these menus so that you have time to type the appropriate short keystrokes.

If you already use these quick keystrokes, you may well have picked up the details of which keys to press pretty much by trial and error (though they are listed in the Quick Reference section of the User Guide). What you may not have realised is that you can work out what you need to type just from knowing what the code you want to insert looks like when it is displayed on the screen.

The first thing to look at is whether the code starts with a + or a - and, if so, which: if it starts with a -, then the first key to press is [⊟]; if it starts with a + or neither, then the first key is [⊞]. Then you need to look which letters of the code are written in capitals and whether there are any numbers in the code: these are the characters you need to type after the [⊞] or [⊟] (remembering to finish with [ENTER] if you type a number).

The exception – there always is one! – is the Layout code `(LayouT)`. The special feature of this code is that to insert it, you need to type [⊞]LT (the letters in capitals) *followed by a number*, even though there is no number in the code. The reason for this inconsistency is that the Layouts that you can insert by this method are copies of the Stock Layouts held in the document's Document Set-up and you need to type a number to identify the Stock Layout you require. However, the Layout code doesn't retain this number because, from the moment the code is inserted, the Layout code becomes independent of the Stock Layout from which it was made.

Setting margins and tabs

The final set of quick techniques we'll look at are some special keystrokes that are available when you are using the Layout Editor to set up new margins and tabs.

As you probably know, when you first go into the Layout Editor, the cursor on the Ruler line is placed at the lefthand margin. So if you want to change the position of the righthand margin, you apparently have a lot of cursoring to do (though again, holding down [SHIFT] as you press the Cursor keys will speed matters up). In fact, all this cursoring is quite unnecessary because pressing [SPACE] will take you straight to the righthand margin. Similarly, pressing [TAB] anywhere along the Ruler line will take the cursor straight to the next Tab marker on the line.

Once the cursor is at a margin or a Tab position, there are some special keystrokes that you can use to change the margin position or change the type of Tab at this position. For example, to move either margin to the left of its current position, you just need to position the cursor on the margin and then press [⊟]. To move it to the right, press [⊞] instead. There's no need to use the f1 Margins menu at all.

The [⊞] and [⊟] keys also do magic things with Tabs while you are working with the Layout Editor. If the cursor is positioned on a Tab marker and you press [⊟], then as you probably know, the Tab marker is cleared. If however you press [⊞], the type of Tab changes: if you keep pressing [⊞] you will see the Tab marker cycle through all the different types of Tab – Simple, Right, Centre, Decimal and back to Simple again. If the cursor is not on a Tab marker, then the first time you press [⊞], LocoScript will place a Simple Tab at the cursor position for you. So if you simply want to place a Simple Tab at a particular position on the Ruler line, all you need to do is cursor to this position and press [⊞].

The best strategy

The strategy we suggest you adopt is to take advantage of the menus when you want to do something that you are not too familiar with but to use as many as possible of the shortcuts for all your everyday actions. The menus will help you get the right results; the shortcuts will leave you plenty of time for typing your all important text.

The shortcuts aren't as difficult to learn as you might think. All you need to remember are a few simple rules: if you want a big movement, then hold down [SHIFT]; if you want to go backwards, then hold down [ALT]; if you want to turn something on or off, or make it more or less, or move it right or left, then try pressing [⊞] or [⊟]

LocoMail: a Consultant's Casebook

by John Blandford

Last year we advertised for LocoMail consultants – people with a good knowledge of LocoMail who could help less experienced users put their applications into practice. One of the people who responded was John Blandford, who already offered training and support for the PCW.

We invited him to write an article specially for Script about typical LocoMail problems that people have sought help with over the past year. What follows is his own account of the problems he's been asked to tackle, along with his suggested solutions and tips on using LocoMail in general.

"The launch of the first Amstrad PCW in the autumn of 1985 attracted many first time users to the world of word-processing and computing and created a demand for training and support. In recent months, the business I started to meet this demand has sprung a rapidly growing offshoot – a postal LocoMail programming and consultancy service.

The typical client is the owner of a small business, probably started within the last year or so. He or she will probably be a *Script* subscriber or a reader of the 8000 Plus magazine. It follows that most clients already have some idea of what LocoMail has to offer.

Indeed many make their approach to me after going some way to solving a programming problem themselves. Rarely is an approach made by a novice; which leads me to believe there are many PCW owners out there who have no idea of the calculation and data management facilities available within LocoMail. The image of the PCW solely as an alternative to an electric typewriter persists. After burning the midnight oil and seeing their Fill or Merge files disappear off the screen for the umpteenth time, clients seek help from a fresh mind or, I guess, risk throwing something at the computer.

A landscape gardener, a LocoScript enthusiast with a rapidly growing business, had already devised his own ambitious fee quotation program, containing more than 40 conditional clauses, before getting in touch with me. His program needed only a few amendments, mainly to the calculation sections, before it was up and running.

Another client, a solicitor, with a 90-file, 400k suite of conveyancing documents also sought help with the calculation modules. This commission has led to our collaborating on a joint project for a company that will shortly market this set of conveyancing documents and other legal packages to run on PCWs.

Requests for assistance fall into three main categories: help with conditional clauses, the design of invoicing and similar calculation programs and requests for programs that will search LocoMail data files on a selective basis in order to produce address labels or mailshots.

Help with invoices

Whilst invoicing applications may appear obvious, these often need to be tailored to meet the needs of a particular business. Not all invoices will be of the form: item number, quantity, one-line description and price.

Even businesses that have accounts programs running on PCs, have been known to use their PCWs for invoicing because of the flexibility it offers.

An extract from an architect's invoicing form is shown on the next page (labelled 1) as an illustration of an interesting invoicing requirement. For this application, the LocoMail program must allow for "Details" which can occupy several lines. The program must also automatically word-wrap to restrict the width of space occupied by these details and thereby avoid them spilling over into the numerical entry columns. In addition, fees have to appear in one column and expenses in another.

As the technique used to restrict the space occupied by the "details" in each entry can be adapted for other purposes, this part of the architect's invoicing program is reproduced on the next page (labelled 2).

Note that the layout code in the first line of the loop has to be set so that the right hand margin is at position 35 in order to stop the details overlapping the remaining columns. In the third line of the loop, the layout code returns the document to full width margins with the decimal tabs positioned as shown in the screen dump of the program. Note the use of a line space of zero in two places in the loop so as to introduce a change of layout without creating a new line. This makes it possible for the fees and expenses to appear on the same line as the last line of the details.

Placing totals on a pre-printed form, when the number of entries in an invoice can vary, poses another problem. The next diagram –which reproduces the last section of the architect's invoicing program (screen dump 3 on the next page) – shows how this can be overcome. The prompt

```
(+Mail)?; press RETURN until
line 48 then ENTER key (-Mail)
```

in the first line, makes it possible for even an inexperienced operator to position the final totals correctly.

❶

FEE ACCOUNT INVOICE

Details	Fee	Expenses	VAT at 15%
Consultation 2 Visits to site	1600.00	50.00	247.50
Second consultation	300.00		45.00
Totals	1900.00	50.00	292.50
TOTAL AMOUNT NOW DUE £	2242.50		

❷

```
(#Mail)totfee=0.00:totexp=0.00:totvat=0.00:fin=1↵
tab="→                                    ":cr="↵
"↵
Loop="(LayouT)(#LSpace0)↵
(#LSpace1)(#Mail)?; Enter description of item ↵
(=Mail)(LayouT)(#LSpace0)↵
(#LSpace1)(#Mail)rpy=?; Fee (f) or Expenses (e) ? ↵
amount=?#; amount ? ↵
amount=[amount|2]↵
#rpy="f":<:totfee=[totfee+amount|2]:>↵
#rpy<>"f":<:totexp=[totexp+amount|2]:>↵
vat=[amount*0.15|2!]:totvat=[totvat+vat|2]↵
#rpy="f":<:tab:amount:tab:tab:vat:cr:>↵
#rpy<>"f":<:tab:tab:amount:tab:vat:cr:>↵
↵
more=?; more entries (y) or (n) ?↵
#more<>"n":<:fin=1:><:fin=0:>(=Mail)↵
"(=Mail)↵
-------------------------------------------------------------↵
[CLIENTS NAME,ADDRESS, JOB NUMBER, DATE, ETC. ARE PLACED HERE]↵
-------------------------------------------------------------↵
(#Mail)?fin%loop(=Mail)↵
↵
↵
↵
```

❸

```
↵
(#Mail)?; press RETURN until line 48 then ENTER key↵
tab:totfee:tab:totexp:tab:totvat:cr:cr↵
tab:totexp:cr:cr↵
tab:totvat:cr:cr↵
total=[totfee+totexp+totvat|2]↵
tab:total(=Mail)↵
↵
↵
```

Merge or Fill?

There have been several invoicing applications where I have recommended a client to use a Merge program instead of a Fill document. Data for the invoice is entered into a data file which is often laid out using tabs to make the columns of entries easier to check. Remember that LocoMail ignores any tabs that appear in a data file.

The Merge program which produces the invoices, takes the data from the invoice file, and performs the calculations on it. This method has the advantage that any errors in the data entries can easily be corrected and the Merge program can be re-run. Whereas, when using Fill for any invoice with a long list of entries, one error can mean that all the items have to be entered again.

The screen dump in the next column (labelled 4) is a modified version of the layout of the data file used by a supplier of records, tapes and compact discs to a County Library. In this application a comma has been used as the item separator. The Merge program (not shown) associated with this data file contains facilities for calculating nett prices, discounts, VAT and delivery charges.

As an added bonus, labels giving the item numbers and other information the library requires are produced from the same data file.

The same Merge approach will also be useful if a quotation and a final schedule are to be produced from the same data file or if, as is the case with a Livery Stables invoicing program, there are few changes each month in the names of tenants or the stabling fees they pay. Allowance can be made in the structure of the data file and in the program to cope with items such a shoeing, shavings, worming and any extra items such as veterinary fees which may vary from month to month. The next screen dump (labelled 5 below) shows the layout of the data file template used by the Livery Stables. This time a slash has been used as the item separator.

Each month a copy of the data file template is made and edited to include those items to be charged that month. The invoice program (not shown) that is Merged with this data file calculates the monthly stabling charges from the weekly charge quoted to the client. VAT is added on appropriate items and totals are produced. A facility for adding a message to all tenants is included.

In addition, another Merge program acts on the same monthly data file to produce a summary VAT analysis which is then entered into the accounts. In the case of the Livery Stables for whom this program was devised, the excellent Money Manager Plus accounts package is used.

❹

```
B: group 0/LIBINV  .DAT  Editing text.                    Printer idle.  Using   B:
INVOICEDATA   Pi10   LS1   CR+0   LP6                                  Page   1  line  1
f1=Actions    f2=Layout    f3=Style    f4=Size    f5=Page    f7=Spell    f8=Options  E
L.....!.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....
ORDER_NO,→  MFR,→  CAT_NUMBER,→  COMPOSER,→  TITLE,→          CLAS,→  PRICE,→QTY↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
P1234567,→  EMI,→  ABC1234,→     Beethoven,→  Symphony No. 4,→  Sym,→  12.99,→3↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
P1234568,→  POLY,→  XYZ 872 12,→  Miscell's,→  BASIE,→         Jazz,→  8.99,→ 1↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
```

❺

```
0/LIVDATA .TEM  Editing text.                          Printer idle.  Usi
:  0  Pi12   LS1   CR+0   LP6                                        Page
ns    f2=Layout    f3=Style    f4=Size    f5=Page    f7=Spell    f8
L.....2.....3.....4.....5.....6.....7.....
NAME/→          LC/→  SH/→  SU/→  WM/→  EXTRA_ITEM/→AMT↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
Christine Jones/→30.00/→0.00/→ 0.00/→ 0.00/→ NONE/→      0.00↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
John Smith/→    25.00/→0.00/→ 0.00/→ 0.00/→ NONE/→      0.00↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
Bill Brown/→    27.00/→0.00/→ 0.00/→ 0.00/→ NONE/→      0.00↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
Bryan Jones/→   67.00/→0.00/→ 0.00/→ 0.00/→ NONE/→      0.00↓
═══════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════════
```

LocoMail can deal with a wide range of calculation applications. One commissioned by a road haulage firm, dealt with the monthly schedule and analysis of magazine returns from a 54-route national network of wholesalers. Another program supplied to a bus operator dealt with fuel rebate claims.

Probably the most complicated LocoMail program I have written to date deals with the entries and calculations required to complete a Magistrates Court Legal Aid Costs Claim Form.

All of these applications may seem to be more appropriately tackled by spreadsheet software but LocoMail, especially when used in Merge form, though rather slow, scores in its ease of use, printer control and editing facilities.

Hints and Tips

With the help of the clearly written LocoMail User Guide and the LocoMail Examples Disc, many PCW owners are able to design their own programs.

For less straightforward applications, however, time and persistence are needed to get them working properly. On the other hand, a consultant learns from the range of problems clients pose and develops some approaches of his or her own to meet them.

For example, I generally avoid the use of the

```
(+Mail)# NOT(TOWN="Coventry")
:<:*:>(-Mail)
```

method of selective mail-merging (see page 127 of the LocoMail User Guide) as this involves the loading of the document even when the pass is to be rejected: a very time consuming practice when only a few records from a data file meet the search criteria.

Instead, I encourage the use of a separate Merge program to create a new extracted data file containing only those records which are to be used. This data file is then saved and Merged with the main Merge program to produce the documents.

One simple method for doing this is to have an additional FLAG item in the data record which can be used to mark those items to be included in the extracted-data file.

The record structure and first two records of such a data file are shown below. In this example, the data file initially has Z as the flag-item entry in all the records. To make a selective mailshot, the operator makes a copy of the data file and edits it, changing Z to Y for those records to be used in the mailshot.

❻

```
FLAG↵
COMPANY↵
ADDRESS↧
═══════════════════════
Z↵
SW Security Consultants↵
45 Ringing Lane↵
Catcheme↵
Nr Premise↵
Redhanded PO2 7CQ↧
═══════════════════════
Y↵
Hazelmay Training Service↵
Intime House↵
34 Sharon Road↵
Attleschool FR9 2FU↧
```

An extracted-data file (which contains only those records flagged with a Y) is then created by using the following Merge program (labelled 7). (Now that LocoFile is available, changing the FLAG items will become even easier.)

❼

```
(+Mail)LOU:="(+MaiI)↵
#FLAG="Y":<↵
FLAG(-Mail)↵
(+Mail)COMPANY(-Mail)↵
(+Mail)ADDRESS(-Mail)↧
─────────────────────
(+Mail)#↵
(-Mail)"↵
↵
(-Mail)FLAG↵
COMPANY↵
ADDRESS↧
─────────────────────
(+Mail)FLAG%LOU↵
```

Several clients have asked for a search program based on area codes or on both area codes and account categories.

A Merge program can be written to do this. It contains two Fill statements asking the operator to list the areas and categories to be searched for. The operator is given the alternative of entering "ALL" for area code or account category to make the program more flexible.

The following example is a simplified version, limited to a search based on a list of area codes, but illustrates the approach that has been used. The record structure of the data file contains three items CODE,COMPANY and ADDRESS.

The Merge program shown below is designed to produce labels selectively and asks for the area codes to be listed with a slash before, between and after each area code; e.g. /NW/SW/MID/. Record numbers could be used instead of codes.

❽

```
(+Mail)fin=1↵
↵
LIST=?; List area codes with slash ↵
;  before and after each code      ↵
;  e.g. /NW/SW/MID/                ↵
↵
──────
loop="(+Mail)↵
AMENDCODE="*/"& CODE &"/*"↵
#LIST<>AMENDCODE:<↵
        $+↵
        AMCODE="*/" & CODE & "/*":>↵
↵
──────
#LIST=AMENDCODE:<↵
        COMPANY(-Mail)↵
(+Mail)ADDRESS(-Mail)↵
↧
──────
(+Mail)$+:>↵
↵
#CODE="":<:fin=0:>↵
↵
(-Mail)"↵
(-Mail)(+Mail)↵
fin%loop(-Mail)
──────
```

A delimiter for each code (a slash) has been used so that, for example, record 12 would not be matched in a list containing the number 3125. The length of the search list must be limited to 100 characters. It is easy to modify this program to produce an extracted-data file (as shown in the flag example earlier).

Readers' letters that appear in *Script*, show that there are many subscribers who are already making full use of LocoMail's facilities. It is hoped that this article will have stimulated others to explore its potential. ❞

If you need help with LocoMail, you can contact John Blandford at the following address:

15 St Albans Way, Sandridge, St Albans, Herts AL4 9LA.

It's best to contact him initially with an outline of the problem and to discuss the fee!

Printing lists from LocoFile

Since LocoFile became available, we've received a number of requests for help in printing out information from your LocoFile datafiles. Unfortunately, each case requires individual attention and we just don't have the resources to provide that level of help. What we can do, though, is offer solutions to common problems which show the principles that you need to apply to your own problems. In this article, we look how you can use LocoFile to print a phone list from an address file.

The task we are going to look at in this article is printing a phone list from the ADDRESS.DAT datafile supplied on the LocoFile Master disc.

The ADDRESS.DAT datafile contains records of First name, Surname, Address, Home phone and Work phone, and it is indexed in such a way that you can pull out records in alphabetical order of Surname and First name. A typical record from this datafile is shown below.

The basic tool

The basic tool we'll use to print the list is LocoFile's Print Extract facility, available through the f4 Print menu.

This allows you to select the items from the record and print these as a block of information; for our phone list, you might select `First name`, `Surname` and `Home phone` – perhaps `Work phone` as well. (The `Whole record` option prints the whole of the information in the record, laid out in exactly the same way as when displayed on the screen, giving you a convenient way of keeping a printed copy of all the records.)

The fundamental technique of printing Extracts is very simple. You start by using LocoFile's f2 Index menu to set the current index to the order in which you want the records to be printed – in this case, we want to select the `Full name` index.

Once you have set the index you want, you press [f4] to display the Print menu, set the amount of the datafile you want to print and the quality of printing you want, then cursor down to `Extract` at the bottom of the menu and press [ENTER]. A further menu then appears, listing the items in the record so that you can select the items you want to include.

This is basically the same menu LocoFile offers when you want to extract items from your datafile into a Block for transferring to the document you're working on. It works in the same way, too: the menu initially shows the standard Extract combination that has been set for this datafile, but if you want to change this selection you can either use `Select all` and `Select none` at the bottom of the menu or set and clear items individually. When you have the items you want, you just move the cursor to `Print` and press [ENTER], and the extracts are printed – after LocoScript's done its usual checking of the current printer and paper against those intended to be used with the datafile.

The problem

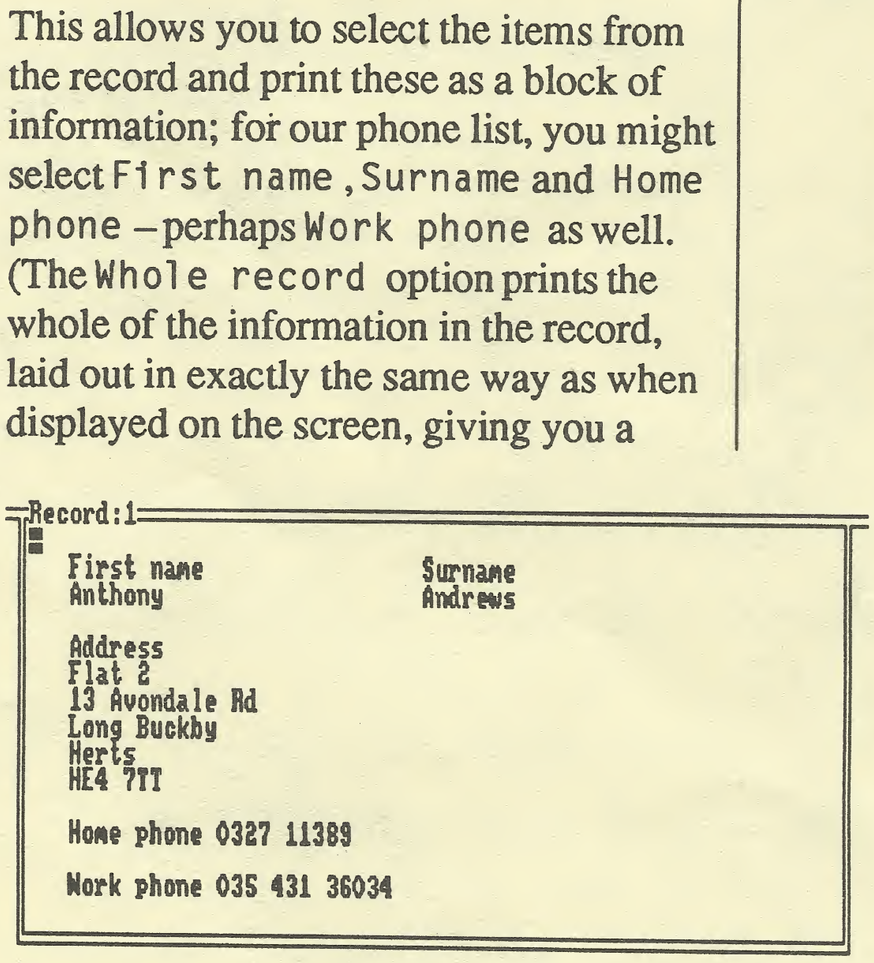
The problem, as many of you have discovered, is that each extract from a record is printed in the top lefthand corner of a fresh page – not a very satisfactory way of producing a list.

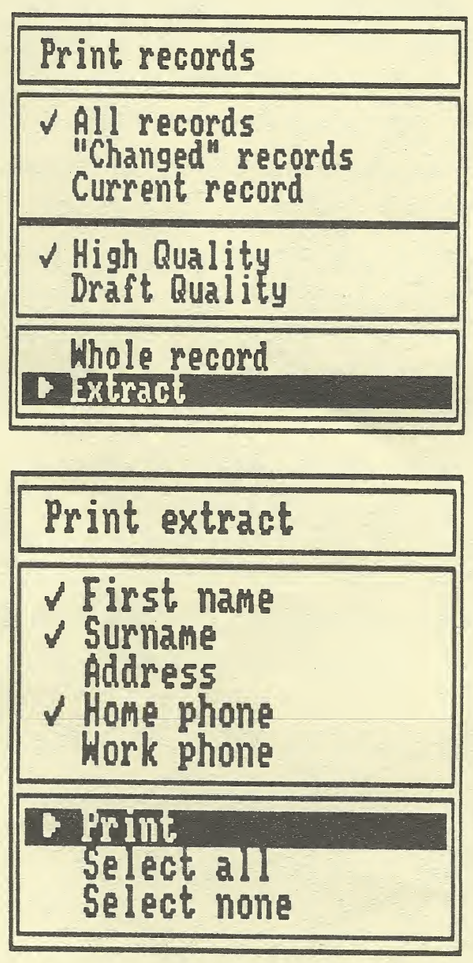
At this point, you might be wondering why we bothered to include the Print Extract feature in LocoFile.

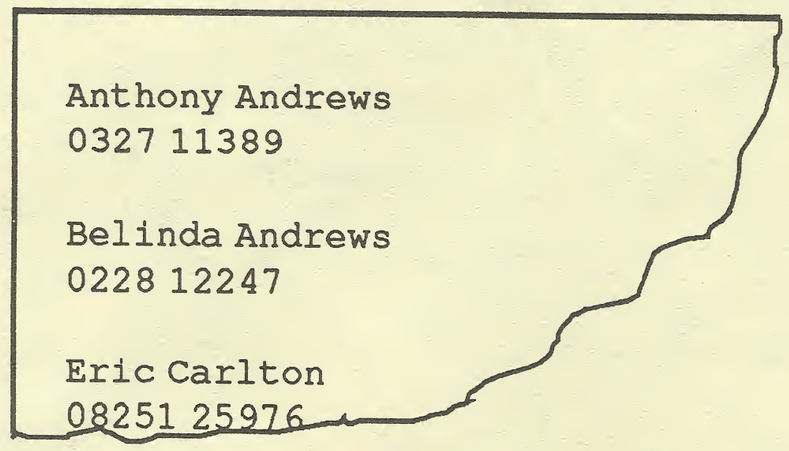
The answer

Well, the answer is that, with just a little preparation, you can make this feature work quite well for you – particularly if all you want to print is address labels (which is what we set the feature up for).

Just before you print, you need to press [PTR] to go into Printer Control State and use the f3 Paper menu to set the Current Paper Type to one that suits the Extracts you want to print. For example, if you wanted to print address labels, you would set the Current Paper Type to your Labels stationery. Then when you print, take the `Use current` option when this is offered – and the Extracts are printed, again each on a separate page, but at least this time the size of the page is appropriate to what you're trying to print!







This whole scheme is, as we said, set up principally to allow you print labels but, with a bit of trickery, it's possible to adapt the steps to let us print lists. What we do is something that, up to now, we've always told you never to do and that's tell LocoScript a white lie about the paper it will be printing on. For example, if you want to print the details from a fresh record every 6 lines down your 11" continuous paper, then you use a Paper Type that describes pages that are only 6 lines long. This gives you 11 'pretend' pages on one actual page. (Of course, you must choose page lengths that divide into the 66 lines that you really get on 11" continuous or part of the list will be printed over the perforations!)

You don't even have to print your list on continuous stationery, though we would recommend you to use continuous if you have some available. You can print it on single A4 sheets by being slightly more devious. In this case, you not only lie about the paper length but you also pretend it's continuous stationery (so that LocoScript doesn't wait for you to load fresh paper after printing each "page").

Pretending that single sheet stationery is continuous would seem to be asking for LocoScript to print off the bottom of the paper. Continuous stationery is normally hundreds of sheets long whereas A4 single sheets are just 11⅔" long. But in fact you have a built-in safeguard against printing on the platen – the paper sensor. The function of the paper sensor is to send a signal to LocoScript when it detects the end of the paper. Paper Types for single sheet stationery normally opt to `Ignore paper sensor` because LocoScript knows to stop at the end of each page anyway. With continuous stationery, you need LocoScript to respond to the signal from the paper sensor because it's the only way LocoScript knows it'snearly out of paper.

On the PCW8256/8512's built-in printer, this sensor stops you printing about four lines from the bottom of the page, giving you 60 usable lines on your A4 stationery (its full length of 70 lines, minus the 6 lines that are wound through when the paper is loaded and minus these four lines at the bottom). This 60 lines can be used as 10 pages of 6 lines, 12 pages of 5 lines, 15 pages of 4 lines,... just as you wish. So all you need to do is set up a Paper Type that describes Continuous stationery of the page length you require, with zero Top and Bottom Gaps and the `Ignore paper sensor` option cleared.

The fact that the 8256/8512's built-in printer is stopped after 60 lines is very convenient because of the way 60 is divisible by so many useful numbers. But that doesn't make this technique exclusive either to the built-in printer or to A4 sheets of paper, though don't expect to get very efficient use out of single sheet paper used in this way on the PCW9512's built-in printer. For a start, the paper sensor only works if the tractor unit is fitted but, more importantly, the sensor stops the printer 17 lines from the bottom of the page.

You don't even have to worry if the place the paper sensor stops the printer a couple of lines earlier than you would like (for example, after 58 lines rather than 60). Provided it is possible to print a whole number of your pretend pages on the paper you are using, it is OK to consider the usable length as being a few lines longer. You'll see why, below.

The only thing you need to guard against is trying to print in the bottom half inch where the paper is not held securely and so your text could come out printed at a bit of an angle.

The way it works

The way it works is as follows.

When you first load your single sheet paper, the printer's loading mechanism automatically positions the paper ready to print 1" down the page. This will be the start of the first of your pretend pages.

As you print, LocoScript simply prints pretend page after pretend page until the paper sensor triggers it to stop. The point at which it stops could be the end of a "page" but it may just be part way down, even if according to your arithmetic it ought to be at end of the page. (The paper can slip slightly in the printer.)

So unless you are certain the current page has been printed, it is best to assume that it hasn't and follow LocoScript's procedure for 'Finishing the current page'. This involves pressing [PTR] to go into Printer Control State and then pressing [f1] to bring the Actions menu onto the screen.

When the menu is displayed, move the cursor to the `Finish this page` that has been added to this menu. Press [ENTER] and then [EXIT] to leave Printer Control State: LocoScript then finishes the current page and stops again – whereupon you load fresh paper and continue as before.

The remaining problem

There's just one problem left – the layout of the printed extracts.

As you will see if you try it, the information taken from each record is laid out in a very simple-minded fashion with carriage returns between the items except where the items appear on the same line of the record when LocoFile puts spaces between, instead. This is, of course, perfectly adequate for printing address labels but not necessarily ideal for other types of output. In particular, there's no attempt to wrap text at a (non-existent) righthand margin, so if an item contains more than about 90 characters (typically) then there's a good chance that only the first part of it will be printed.

Some improvement can be made by careful arrangement of the datafile's Pattern Card so that the carriage returns and spaces inserted between the items work well for you. For example, you could put the `Home phone` number on the same line as `First name` and `Surname` so that you print the phone number on the same line as the person's name.

However, even such refinements don't give you the type of layout you ideally want – with tabs, different print styles (bold, italic etc.), helpful extra pieces of text like the words `Home` and `Work` telling you which phone number is which...

What you need is LocoMail.

Using LocoMail gives you full control not only over the amount of information you print but also over how it is laid out. You can choose the margins you want to lay out the information between, use tab stops to align it nicely, use all the different Print styles and add in extra pieces of text wherever you want. You can even add headers and footers if you like.

Furthermore, there's no need to lie about the type of paper you are using, because you can put all the information into a single document that is properly formatted for the paper you actually use.

We'll be looking at how you can use LocoMail to print this phone list in the next issue of Script, along with the new commands LocoMail has to allow it to pick out information in index order from a LocoFile datafile.

Letters to the Editor

LocoFile & ASCII files

I'm using LocoFile to store information but I've got a problem. I've written an accounts program in Mallard BASIC and I want the program to read and process the information in my LocoFile datafile. Is this possible?
Mrs EL, Southampton

Yes, it is possible for you to use information from a LocoFile datafile in a CP/M program but you'll need LocoMail to help you do this.

Mallard BASIC programs work in CP/M and can therefore only read ASCII files. Converting a LocoScript document to ASCII is simply a matter of using the 'Make ASCII' feature. However, LocoFile datafiles are not like LocoScript documents so you can't use 'Make ASCII' to convert datafiles directly into ASCII files.

What you can do is use LocoMail to bridge the gap between LocoFile and LocoScript. All that's needed is a simple LocoMail program to fetch the information from the datafile into a LocoScript document. Save the result to disc and then convert it into ASCII, ready for use with your Mallard BASIC program. In a future issue of Script, we'll describe how to produce a suitable LocoMail program to do this.

Sorting dates

I unwisely set up my LocoFile document to sort on birthdays using Month/Day instead of Day/Month. I've now corrected this. But while it was wrongly set up I noticed that it wasn't sorting correctly. It was all right with dates like 7/4 and 11/12 but it sorted 25/3 before 13/10 – surely month 13 should come before month 25?
Mr SA, Macclesfield

The effect you've noticed occurred because LocoFile treats all months greater than 12 as the same. Therefore it's sorting xx/3 before xx/10. You won't ever have trouble with sensible dates, of course!

Printing on a 24 pin printer

I recently bought the 24 Pin Printer Drivers Disc from you to use with my 24 pin printer, but so far my efforts to print anything sensible have failed. All I can produce is a series of exclamation marks followed by other spurious characters. Have I set up my disc incorrectly or is it a problem with the printer itself? I do hope you can advise me.
Mr AT, Doncaster

We don't think that the problem lies with the disc. Instead we suspect that the printer is not set up correctly.

The 24 Pin Printer files take advantage of a feature of 24 pin printers that allows the 'downloading' of information into the printer's buffer. It's this feature that lets you produce all LocoScript's characters, pitches and Print styles on the printer.

In order to achieve this, LocoScript needs to use as much of the printer's buffer as possible to store the characters and commands. To release this space, you have to reduce the size of the buffer that the printer uses for its own characters. This is done by setting the buffer size to its minimum.

You should check the settings on the printer and, if necessary, change them – the manual for your printer will explain how to do this.

*If the printer's settings are correct, then the problem is most likely to be caused by switching on the printer **after** you've loaded the software. The result is that the printer is not in a state that LocoScript can work with and so it can't respond to the commands LocoScript sends. The solution to this problem is to simply reset the printer by selecting `Reset printer` on the f1 Actions menu in Printer Control State.*

Filling up Drive M

I have just purchased LocoFile for my PCW9512 and am having a few problems with it. When my start of day disc is loaded the M drive shows 280k used and only 4k available! Is there some way of freeing space on Drive M?
Mr MM, Cheltenham

We guess that the space in Drive M is used up by the sample LocoFile files we supply on the LocoFile disc.

The Start-of-day disc you create from the master LocoFile disc should only contain the files to load the software along with the support files you need. All other files should be erased. This is particularly important for the LocoFile master disc, because we supply a range of sample datafiles on this disc. Any LocoFile datafile with a filetype of .DAT is automatically copied to Drive M from your Start-of-day disc.

We recommend making two copies of the LocoFile disc. Erase the .DAT files from one to give you a Start-of-day disc and erase the system files from the other to give you a LocoFile samples disc.

5¼" disc drives

I have read with interest your reply to "Mr BL" of Bolton about his problems when using a Peartree 5¼" disc drive. I have such a drive and I, too, have suffered the same problem when certain programs have not recognised the 5¼" drive because it is not a 3" one.

However, I fear that your advice to him of disconnecting his Peartree drive is rather like taking the proverbial sledgehammer to crack the proverbial nut. If my experience is right there is a much simpler method. Just don't put a disc into the 5¼" drive. On the occasions when I do that the information at the top of the screen tells me that Drive B is not fitted.
Mr RM, Colmworth

A number of people have written in with similar advice and we agree that this is certainly an easier solution to the problem.

In fact, it's only a hardware quirk that allows you to use the method you have described. If there's no disc in a 5¼" drive when you start up, the wrong signal is sent back to LocoScript which results in the "Drive B not fitted" message.

Letters to the Editor

'Using M'

I purchased LocoFile just before Christmas and have found it remarkably easy to use. There is one thing that puzzles me, though. When I load the version of LocoScript that came with LocoFile, the top line of the Disc Manager Screen says 'Using M' even though I'm not working on this drive. This didn't happen with version 2.16 of LocoScript. Can you explain the anomaly?
Mr TE, Salford

Before version 2.20 of LocoScript, the 'Using M' message appeared whenever you edited or printed a document from Drive M. With the latest version, the 'Using M' message also appears whenever you have a printer available.

This happens because LocoScript now handles the printer files in a different way. In order to let you reclaim space in Drive M when you need to, the latest version of LocoScript 2 uses less memory for printer information than before.

Information about the Character Set is no longer copied into the printer's working space in Drive M. Instead LocoScript takes the information directly from the Character Set file in Drive M. The Character Set file in Drive M is therefore in use so LocoScript confirms this on the top line of the screen.

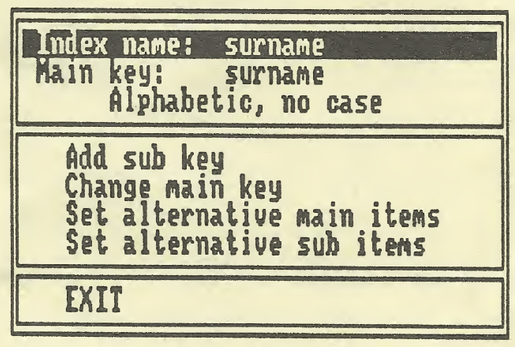
If you run out of space on Drive M, you can erase the Character Set file and give yourself more space to play with. In this case there is a slightly different procedure for erasing the Character Set file – see the article 'Introducing LocoScript 2.20' on page 3 of this issue for more details.

Index names

In learning to use LocoFile, I have had some difficulty in getting it to create indexes. I can go through the procedure listed in Chapter 9 of the LocoFile User Guide and when I try to make "Surname" my main index I cannot exit from the program but get the error message "Error in LocoFile; Index name is not unique: try again". I'm not sure what this means. My card index is a simple one with Title, Name, Surname, Address. Could you please advise me.
Rev SJ, Aberdeen

The message "Index name is not unique" means that you're creating a index with the same name as an existing index or that you haven't given the index a name at all.

When you create an index, LocoFile automatically gives the index the name of the item you first select for the Main key. After you've set the details, a menu is displayed summarising the options set so far and offering you further options for adding or changing keys. The top line of this menu records the name of the index.



We guess that you have already created an index with surname as the Main key and want to add a new index with different details. LocoFile won't let you have two indexes with the same name, so the warning message appears and you have the option to try again. Pressing ENTER *returns you to the summary menu and you can simply change the index name and exit from the menu in the usual way. Alternatively, pressing* CAN *tells LocoFile to forget what you're doing and allows you to start again from scratch.*

You'll get the same message if you have cleared the index name filled in by LocoFile, and forgotten to type in another name. In this case, accepting the option to try again and typing in a suitable name allows you to continue.

Verifying discs

Can you tell me what the Verify option on the f2 Disc menu does? I haven't used it so far in case I damaged a disc.
Mr DF, Southport

It's not possible to damage a disc using the Verify option. In fact, it's designed to help you check whether or not a disc is damaged!

When you select the Verify option, LocoScript examines each track of the disc in turn, looking for errors. If there is a problem with the disc, LocoScript stops and displays one of two messages.

The message `Disc Address Mark Missing` *means that LocoScript can't read the 'red tape' on the disc – the information about the formatting of the disc. The other message is* `Disc Data Error`*. This message means that LocoScript can read the 'red tape' but can't read the data on the disc.*

If LocoScript displays either of these messages, it may not be a disaster. Depending on where the fault is, you may be able to retrieve the information on the disc.

If the fault lies in a particular document, then you'll be able to copy the other documents onto a new blank disc. Once you've found the problem document you may even be able to retrieve some or all of it by inserting it into a new document.

If it's the disc's directory that's damaged, this won't be possible. The directory tells LocoScript where all the documents can be found on the disc – if LocoScript can't read the directory, it won't be able to find any of the documents.

In this case, there are two ways you can retrieve the information. If you have a backup of the problem disc, then simply revert to that copy. If you've forgotten to keep a backup, then you can send the disc to David Smith, the disc doctor. (His address is: 41 Tutsham Way, Paddock Wood, Kent, TN12 6UA. All the money he receives for this service is donated to the Cancer Charity BACUP.)

Once you've retrieved the files, you can try re-formatting the problem disc. However, if formatting the disc gives you the same error, you should throw the disc away.

PostScript

Which Computer? Show – No, that's not a question but the name of the first computer show of 1989. The Which Computer Show at the National Exhibition Centre from the 21st to 24th February is the largest computer show in the UK, and this year we'll be going for the first time.

So, if you've just bought LocoFile and want to quiz us on its more esoteric features or you're simply having trouble with page numbers, come along and see us – we've included a ticket with this issue of *Script*.

One thing though – don't expect to be able to buy any of our products at Which. We will not be selling from the stand, although we'll be happy to take your order and dispatch it from Dorking straight after the show.

After the Which Computer Show there's quite a gap to the next computer show we're planning to attend – the Personal Computer Show in September. So if you want to see our products in action it really is worth getting up to Birmingham.

One thing we've noticed recently is that it's getting difficult to buy various extras for the PCW.

When we started selling memory upgrade kits (an esential item if you want to use the LocoScript family on your PCW8256) they cost under £30. But then the chips which make up the kit became hard to get and the price rocketed. At its highest last summer the price of the kit reached £70, but it has now come down to £60. Indeed, at one point the price was changing so fast that we couldn't keep our price lists up to date – by the time we'd printed them the price had changed again!

Just before Christmas it became almost impossible to buy 3" discs. Luckily we were able to find a suitable source and buy sufficient to let us keep up production, but it was close – even the major distributors couldn't meet demand. Indeed we could have sold our stockpile several times over, and at a profit – but that wouldn't have helped our production of software!

Now it seems that printer interfaces are likely to go the same way. There are three suppliers of the interfaces, Amstrad, Pace and SCA. We haven't been able to get hold of the Amstrad CPS8256 interfaces for months, and so swapped to the Pace products. Pace tell us that they have now stopped producing interfaces, so we are looking at the SCA products. Once again it looks like the result of the shortage is that the price is going to rise. However, we're looking into some new products and hope soon to be able to supply compatible printer interfaces at a reasonable price. Watch the News Page for further details.

Many of you are surprised when we can't give an instant answer on the suitability of our products for your printer. The reason for this is simply that, unless we have actually tested our software on your printer, we can't be certain of anything!

Whilst we've only been selling printers for a short time we've noticed several changes of specification (all for the better we must add!) We check every printer before we send it out and were surprised recently when our test program suddenly stopped working. It turned out that another feature had been added to the printer, changing the values of the options we had to set up and invalidating the instructions we provide with the printer. The documentation has now been changed!

We have also found "bugs" in several of the printers we support. Often we can report these to the manufacturer who can supply us with upgraded "firmware" for the printer (that's the software which controls the printer and is built into the printer itself). But we aren't always so lucky – one manufacturer supplied us with revised firmware which actually made the problem worse (we won't mention their name as we hope they'll continue to be helpful).

So next time you want to add a printer to your PCW, do be careful. If it's new and we can't guarantee it will work with LocoScript, get your dealer to test it first or supply it on the understanding that it will be changed if it doesn't work.

Future Issues

In the next issue, we look at the new LocoMail commands to select an index and pick out invidivual records. We'll also show how you can use LocoFile as an electronic diary, typing in the times and dates of events and then printing out a page to include in a personal organiser. Another article will look at how an author might use LocoScript to lay out a script for a play.

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